



Editorial Communications Canada Limited

A subsidiary of The Creative Communications Group Limited

February 16, 1968.

The Dilemma of Young People--their anxieties and frustrations, their search for meaning, identity and truth--remains a top-priority concern of the Montreal YMCA.

Increased involvement with drugs, the distressing lack of communications between generations and the conflict with the Establishment are just a few of the indications of the gravity of the problem.

As you may already know, all YMCAs in Greater Montreal recently completed an in-depth survey to determine the most pressing needs of the communities they serve.

The objective of this research, which also involved a critical self-examination, was to ensure the YMCA remains a relevant and vital movement, in close touch with contemporary problems of people.

The survey confirmed that never before have humans of all ages--collectively and individually--been subjected to so many and such complex pressures. It also pinpointed a number of emerging but vitally-important challenges for the YMCA.

The enclosed notes cover some current concerns of the YMCA, and activities that have been planned or undertaken to resolve them. No attempt has been made to trace the history of the Montreal YMCA which, when founded 116 years ago, was the first YMCA in North America.

I feel certain there is a worthwhile story here for you, and would be pleased to provide any additional background or specific information you might require.

Any editorial support you may provide will be greatly appreciated.

William Sher

Approximately 1400 words

For: Montreal YMCA
From: Editorial Communications Canada Limited
2065 Sun Life Building
Montreal, Quebec
Tel. 861-9274

Contact: William Sher

YMCA SEEKING CO-OPERATIVE WAYS
TO MEET EMERGING AND VITAL NEEDS

Support of all kinds is being offered the Montreal YMCA in its multi-front drive to pin-point and provide real answers to many of the more troublesome problems disrupting society today.

Dr. Wilder Penfield, world-renowned neuro-surgeon, practical humanitarian and president of the Vanier Institute of the Family, offers this encouragement:

"More power to the Young Men's Christian Association of Montreal! The most urgent cause in our society today is to help Canadians to build a stronger, more successful family life. The YMCA contributes strength to this cause in a way that only a YMCA can."

Monseignor Paul Grégoire, Auxiliary Bishop of Montreal, is equally outspoken. "I rejoice at the excellent work accomplished by your Association in the development of personal values and sense of responsibility," he says.

"We have noticed with pleasure the ecumenical orientation your association has adopted. The respect of persons, of their religious convictions and of their cultural affinities cannot but engender harmony and peace," he concludes.

R.G. Rogers, assistant general secretary of the Montreal YMCA, sums it up this way:

Continued

"We feel that by truly welcoming people of all faiths and languages--of all ages--we can help create an environment in which they can share mutual concerns and learn to understand and respect their differences."

The changing problems of young people--from pre-teenagers to many in their early 20s--will also continue to be a top concern of the Montreal YMCA.

"The existence of our eight branches and three camps is justified only so long as they continue to serve real needs. Operating within the broad framework of the Montreal Y, their task is to maintain programs and provide services that are relevant to the times," comments Mr. Rogers.

The Montreal YMCA has four full-facility branches, four community branches, a children's resident camp, a resident camp for young adults and a family day camp.

Each of the full facility branches--DOWNTOWN, INTERNATIONAL, NDG and WESTMOUNT--has a gymnasium for team sports and group workouts, a swimming pool, space for club groups and rooms for continuing education programs. Some also have living accommodations, handball courts, squash courts.

It is the full-facility branches which best fit the most popular conception of a YMCA facility. They are in marked contrast to the fledgling Y operation started recently in the South Shore Community of Chateaugay in a \$10-a-month basement office.

LACHINE-DORVAL, NORTHMOUNT, VERDUN-LASALLE and WEST ISLAND Ys--the community branches--also operate without many of the facilities generally considered hallmarks of a YMCA.

Many of their traditional activities, such as aquatics training and physical education programs, are carried on in community and school swimming pools, school gymnasiums and civic recreation centres, church halls and private homes.

Continued

"But no matter what kind of branch, or where it's located, it's people who make the Y, not buildings and equipment," emphasizes Mr. Rogers.

"The faces change from home to home, from community to community. They reflect different aspirations, different needs, different concerns. Not all of these are pertinent to every branch, but many of them are, increasingly, becoming interrelated."

Current main concerns of the Montreal YMCA include:

The widening communications gap between parents and children;

The increase in the number of young people who seem to be attacking society, or withdrawing from it;

The causes of family breakdowns;

An upsurge in juvenile delinquency in the metropolitan area;

A dramatically disturbing increase in the use of drugs by young people, particularly among 13-14 year olds;

Growing tendencies of all age groups to permit leisure time to become more of a liability than an asset;

The artificial barriers separating Quebec's two main ethnic groups.

NORTHMOUNT YMCA, for example, has started a program for a group of Town of Mount Royal mothers who are anxious to gain a deeper insight into their role in a fast-changing world.

Continued

At the other end of the spectrum there is the community served by INTERNATIONAL BRANCH.

"Here, the main concerns are poverty, unemployment and a high percentage of school drop-outs," notes Mr. Rogers. "Many of these living in this district are newly-arrived immigrants to Canada. A top objective is to help these future citizens adjust to their adopted homeland and learn its languages."

At NDG-Y, the emphasis has shifted from recreational athletics to the restless floundering of young people and their seeming lack of purpose and rebelliousness.

While continuing informal education courses and programs to develop initiative, leadership and physical fitness, this branch is also introducing a number of new activities for older youth and young adults.

WESTMOUNT Y is also preparing to shoulder responsibilities in a number of new and vitally-important fields. In becoming more deeply involved in the affairs of the community it serves, this branch is straining to answer the increasing number of requests for assistance by other groups.

Top concerns of Westmount Y include the marked increase in anti-social or delinquent behavior of juveniles and a strengthening of the forces impersonalizing relationships and threatening family life.

None of the branches are satisfied now to provide only physical activities.

WEST ISLAND Y is also mustering its resources to meet new challenges. This largest suburban YMCA in Canada serves the fast-growing North Shore and West Island communities of Greater Montreal.

Planning ahead for further growth, it too is taking steps to provide: more guidance and counsel to teenagers; more programs to strengthen family relationships; more encouragement and training for volunteer leaders.

Continued

DOWNTOWN YMCA, in the heart of Montreal's bustling business and entertainment district, has one of the most comprehensive range of programs available anywhere.

In addition to physical education, sports and continuing education courses, Downtown Y has launched a number of pilot programs. Here too, the emphasis is on troubled teenagers and young adults, and on co-operative work with other community organizations.

Major emphasis of VERDUN-LASALLE YMCA continues on teenagers, but more and more programs have been developed for pre-schoolers, adults and businessmen. Most of these are carried on in both English and French, and the branch hopes to expand its activities to include programs for elderly people.

LACHINE-DORVAL YMCA's concerns are similar in many ways to those of Verdun-LaSalle Branch. Both are expanding their counselling services and initiating joint community projects with other associations.

LACHINE-DORVAL also provides assistance to the newly-formed CHATEAUGUAY Y.

Most branches have also initiated an out-of-building and on-the-street program with the growing number of young people who avoid any sort of relationship with adults or any contact with established institutions.

"Being a good listener is one of the prime attributes of those involved in this work," observes Mr. Rogers. "Our field workers don't try to force these disassociated young people to accept society as-is. Many are disillusioned, with some justification. Only by demonstrating, repeatedly, that we are truly interested in their ideas and opinions can we expect them to share with us their hopes, fears and aspirations."

Mr. Rogers emphasizes that the Y is not trying to "go-it alone".

"We are eager to co-operate wholeheartedly with any community organization. The co-operative approach to meet community needs-of organizations working together-is without a doubt the best course of action. Our resources, our experience and our facilities are at the

Continued

disposal of everyone. We have already formed a number of liaisons with various groups and associations, and are looking for others."

The field of leisure time activities, for example, is providing an increasing number of opportunities for warm co-operation between different ethnic and language groups, particularly the English and French people in this province.

Together with the Allied Jewish Community services of Montreal, the Federation of Catholic Charities and United Red Feather, the Montreal YMCA recently joined the newly-formed Association of Leisure Time Services of Quebec.

This group will work closely with two French-language associations: Service Régional des Loisirs de Montréal and Confédération des Loisirs du Québec.

Another little-known aspect of the YMCA is its World Service Program. These are designed to help people in emerging nations achieve THEIR objectives by giving them a hand up instead of a hand-out.

"To fulfill our growing responsibilities, we are consciously building in a greater degree of flexibility than ever before," comments Mr. Rogers.

"This means we must cultivate the ability to recognize when traditionally successful programs are outmoded, and encourage willingness to drastically revise or discard them for something more relevant," he emphasizes.

February 16, 1968.